

Cambodia

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PLEASE PASS RODMAN/ADAMS/BORG FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER

1. HERewith FULL TEXT WASHSTAR EDITORIAL, MONDAY, MARCH 17, TITLED "THE SAD STORY OF CONGRESS AND AID FOR INDOCHINA."

2. THERE IS SOMETHING TERRIBLY SAD ABOUT THE APPARENTLY ADAMANT REFUSAL OF CONGRESS TO VOTE FUNDS FOR THE CONTINUED DEFENSE OF CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM. AND WHAT IS SADDEST OF ALL IS THAT SO MANY PEOPLE ARE HAILING THIS DECISION AS A KIND OF MORAL VICTORY FOR THE FORCES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LIBERALISM IN THE UNITED STATES.

3. A GREAT MANY THINGS, OF COURSE, CONTRIBUTE TO THE PREVAILING FRAME OF MIND. THERE IS THE WIDESPREAD DISILLUSION AND REVULSION LEFT OVER FROM THE AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN THE WAR IN INDOCHINA, WHICH HAS ALWAYS FOCUSED ITS HOSTILITY ON THE REGIMES THAT HAPPENED TO BE IN POWER IN SAIGON OR PHNOM PENH. THERE IS THE LOSS OF FAITH IN THE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP OF THE NATION--ENORMOUSLY COMPOUNDED BY THE WATERGATE AFFAIR--WHICH MAKES VIRTUE OF ANY CONGRESSIONAL REBELLION AGAINST PRESIDENTIAL AUTHORITY.

THERE IS A PERCEPTION ON THE PART OF MANY INDIVIDUAL SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN OF A GROWING ISOLATIONIST MOOD IN THE COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY WHEN IT COMES TO SPENDING TAXPAYERS' MONEY ON WHAT ARE DEEMED TO BE LOST FOREIGN CAUSES.

4. WE ARE NOT INSENSITIVE EITHER TO THE ARGUMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA, AND NO DOUBT IN THE MINDS OF MANY TO VIETNAM AS WELL. TO US AS TO THEM, IT SEEMS IMPROBABLE THAT SENDING A FEW MORE HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS WILL DRASTICALLY CHANGE THE COURSE OF THE WAR. CAMBODIA, IN ALL PROBABILITY, IS PAST SAVING; THE BEST THAT CAN BE HOPED FOR THERE IS SOME KIND OF NEGOTIATION THAT MIGHT OFFER A MEASURE OF PROTECTION TO THE CIVILIAN POPULATION AND THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT ARMED FORCES. SOUTH VIETNAM, IT WOULD SEEM, IS STILL IN A POSITION TO DEFEND ITSELF AND SURVIVE AS A FREE NATION. BUT THE EFFORT WILL REQUIRE A GREAT DEAL MORE IN THE WAY OF AMERICAN SUPPORT THAN THE CONGRESS--AND PERHAPS THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AS WELL--ARE WILLING AT THIS POINT TO SUPPLY..

5. THE GENERAL FEELING IS QUITE SIMPLY: WHAT'S THE USE OF GOING ON? SOME OF COURSE HAVE LONG BEEN COMMITTED TO THE INEVITABILITY OF A DEFEAT IN INDOCHINA AND ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO THE DELUGE. FOR OTHERS, THE MOTIVATION IS NOT WHOLLY IGNOBLE--IN THEIR VIEW, CUTTING OFF AID TO OUR ALLIES IS SOMETHING LIKE CUTTING OFF OXYGEN TO A DYING PATIENT, TO SPARE THESE LONG-SUFFERING PEOPLE MORE AGONY. WE HAVE TALKED OURSELVES INTO THE IDEA THAT, IN SUPPLYING VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA WITH THE MEANS OF DEFENDING THEMSELVES, IT IS WE WHO HAVE INSTIGATED AND PERPETUATED THE WAR AND IT IS OUR OBLIGATION TO END IT. "ARE YOU ASKING FOR SURRENDER, THEN, MR. FRASER?" ASKED ROBERT S. INGERSOLL, UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE, AT A CRITICAL MEETING OF THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. "YES," REPLIED THE CONGRESSMAN FROM MINNESOTA, "UNDER CONTROLLED CIRCUMSTANCES, TO MINIMIZE THE LOSS OF LIFE."

6. IN OUR VIEW, THIS ODDLY ETHNOCENTRIC CONCEPT OF THE INDOCHINA WAR IS ONE OF THE MORE GROTESQUE HISTORICAL CONCEPTS. ONE WAY OR ANOTHER--WITH OR WITHOUT OUTSIDE HELP AND REGARDLESS OF IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES--THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA HAVE BEEN STRUGGLING FOR THEIR FREEDOM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY, NOT JUST FOR YEARS, BUT FOR CENTURIES. FOR MOST OF THE WORLD'S HISTORY, IT HAS BEEN CONSIDERED A BRAVE AND NOBLE THING

FOR A PEOPLE TO FIGHT TO PRESERVE THEIR LIBERTY. AND ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, THE FIGHT WILL SURELY GO ON IN A WAR WHICH WE DID NOTHING TO START AND IN WHICH WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO IMPOSE A DECISION.

7. YET IT IS SAD BEYOND WORDS TO HEAR AN AMERICAN CONGRESSMAN VOTE WITH SUCH EVIDENT CONVICTION AND SELF-SATISFACTION FOR SURRENDER AND DEFEAT. FOR MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, IT IS THE UNITED STATES--NOT THE PEOPLE OF CAMBODIA OR VIETNAM--WHICH WILL BE PERFORMING THE ACT OF SURRENDER. THE WORLD WILL DRAW THE APPROPRIATE CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF THIS COUNTRY AS AN ALLY. AND IF THIS IS BOWING TO SOME KIND OF "WAVE OF THE FUTURE," THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY--AND OF THE WORLD--WILL BE VERY SAD INDEED. (END TEXT.) ROBINSON
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